

Dear Sisters:

As the school year draws to a close, we are eager to tell you about the time since our last letter, almost a year ago.

Sometimes we need to be able to live and to let events unfold in order to be able to describe them afterwards.

In our day-to-day lives, we are increasingly aware of the need to be silent in order to quieten down and to allow so many lived realities to settle, to move on from the telling of anecdotes to what is essential. Maybe this will help you to understand our delay in writing (although this is not an excuse)

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot..."
(Ecclesiastes 3: 1 ff.)

1. A time for farewells and readjustments

We ended last year extremely tired from Covid. We have started the new year with renewed strength, saying farewells in the community, in the parish, in the project... and the arrival of people who revitalise our work.

All this has led to changes in the organisation of the project, changes in the team, acceptance of different approaches; and for us the challenge of being grateful for what we have experienced and welcoming what is new, trying every day to be a team and to walk as Church.

It is a time for nurturing, remodelling, rehearsing, a time for "fine-tuning" about how and where we want to be, about what contribution we can make in this time of transition; a time to embrace what is different and to continue to bring to life the Gospel beauty of the project that we undertook with Antoine, the previous parish priest.

2. A time to move

In March this year, the diocese of Rabat offered us a house to live in for the development of the women's project. A French woman living in Oujda gave a two-storey villa as an inheritance to the church of Rabat.

Although it is not the type of home we would have chosen, it is an ideal place to offer shelter to women in difficulty. A third house in five years! A new move... A move that implies, for us as congregations, a greater commitment to this land, to the women and the migrant children in this city.

DAR KUM is the name we have given to the house of welcome. DAR in Dariya means house; KUM refers to the gospel text, "Talita Kum" ("girl, stand up"), and in Dariya the same word means "yours". Your house, the house where you can stand up. May our opening of doors be just that: a place to welcome women and children for different activities; a safe place, where each one can be herself, where she can grow, and a place of opportunity...

We did all the necessary work and made our move, urged on by reality: a woman from the Ivory Coast was knocking on the door to come and start living with us and begin her cancer treatment. Since last week, there have been four of us, well, a little more than four, because Aicha is coming home to take care of her final stages of pregnancy. Illness and life intertwine in Dar Kum, hope and vulnerability.

The process of moving has not only been external, but also and more importantly it has been internal. The move has involved readjustments, hospitals, changes in schedules and habits, letting go of our routines and a significant amount of being present.

It is a time to open to welcoming and to what is new, a time to broaden our horizons and to share life.

3. A time to dream and plan

With the new house come new projects and new dreams that touch our hearts and motivate us. Sometimes these all come together at the same time and it can be difficult to know how to prioritise and to measure our strength.

Dar Kum (the women's shelter for women in difficulty) is now up and running, with great hopes.

In the same house, we have established a room to provide an educational space for children aged 2-5 years who cannot yet go to public school and who spend the whole day in the street (rain, heat, cold...) with their mothers and begging.

During the course of this year, along with Fatima, we offered sewing courses to sub-Saharan women. Some of them have started to make simple textile handicrafts that we hope they can start to sell and so earn some money. This would be a good opportunity to stop begging in the street.

And we continue to support the children and young people who are cared for by the Church of Oujda, those who wish to learn and train. This year two boys have been trained as mechanics and two have been trained as printers and copiers. Several young people have learned to read and write and many have improved their French. We are witnessing how self-esteem improves when a young person is aware of his/her progress, when he/she feels they are becoming more and more independent.

After an "eternal" period of closed borders, the IOM (International Organisation for Migration) has restarted voluntary return flights in recent months. During this year, we have been able to support several young people in this difficult decision to return to their country of origin, but without fulfilling their dream. Being with them in their frustration, without having seen "paradise".... The guidance of young minors, even if it is not a new project, remains a challenge and a call.

A time to consolidate, to let things emerge, to develop and to trust.

4. A time for us to know that we do not know anything

It seems that the more time we spend in this land and in the midst of this reality, the more we are reminded that we know nothing, that we are still novices in this culture that welcomes us. The customs and the rhythms, the language, the culture,

the reasoning, the attitudes... How much we have to learn, how we still lack humility and patience...

From time to time and through concrete events, the reality of migration reminds us that we are treading on ground that is obscure, unknown and uncertain. We sense injustices and pain beyond what is communicated to us. During this time, we have become more aware that child trafficking, smuggling, mafias and extortion are part of the reality of the people with whom we live.

Learning to walk through uncertainty, based on our lack of knowledge. Calls to be silent, **time to look beyond the first thing we see or feel, not to judge, to accompany from a position of not knowing. To be.**

5. A time of opening up of borders:

We really appreciate what once seemed obvious and what was snatched away from us by a pandemic! With the opening up of our borders, we are finally experiencing what previously we had not been able to enjoy in Oujda: that our friends and companions can come and visit us. Finally, María Teresa Alcón rscj and M. Carmen Muñoz rjm were able to come and visit Oujda (the two religious appointed by the two congregations to accompany the project): an important moment of sharing. We hope that during the next school year more of our companions from the two congregations will be able to come and spend a few days with us.

The two Congregations have reopened their volunteer programmes and we have launched our own project, eager to share our life and mission with others.

This summer three young people will come for ten days to live and share experiences with the young people here. It will be a first step for possible future encounters.

A time to be close together even at a distance, a time to open up our house and your house to our Sisters, a time to widen the tent, a time of hope.

On the eve of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, a great feast for rscj and an important feast for rjm as well, we continue to pray to Him. May he show us how to know how to say goodbye, how to welcome, how to settle, how to dream, how to hold on to dreams and how to walk in the midst of uncertainties. And doing it all in His way.

With love,

Montse Prats rscj y Rosa Ros rjm

